

MESSIAH THE PRINCE,
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.
By William Symington.
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 21.

CHAPTER 8.
THE MEDIATORIAL DOMINION
OVER THE NATIONS.
(Continued.)

Thirdly. Another set of proofs will be found in numerous designations, implying dominion over the nations, which are given to Christ in the Scriptures. Such are the following:—‘For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and he is GOVERNOR AMONG THE NATIONS.’ [Psalm 22.28.] That the psalm in which this occurs refers to Christ, we need not wait to prove; and that it refers to him as Mediator, is evinced by the whole tenor of the composition itself. His being called in the verse *Lord* or *Jehovah*, is not inconsistent with this view, as the same high appellation is applied to him in other parts of Scripture. It cannot be doubted that the preceding verse foretells the extension of the church of Christ. ‘All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.’ What immediately follows being introduced as accounting for the universal spread of the kingdom of Messiah, it must be considered as referring to the same illustrious personage. ‘For the kingdom is the Lord’s; and he is the governor among the nations.’ Here, then, is a glorious title, distinctly recognising the dominion of the Mediator over the nations of men—a title which the nations may, indeed, overlook, but which they cannot disregard with impunity, and which shall one day be as fully acknowledged by them as it has been hitherto shamefully neglected and despised.

The eighty-ninth psalm refers to Messiah. He is the chosen of the Father, with whom he has made a covenant, whose seed he will establish for ever, and whose throne he will build up to all generations. Now, mark what he says of him in the course of this psalm:—‘I will make him my first-born, HIGHER THAN THE KINGS OF THE EARTH.’ [Psalm 89.27.] Here is another glorious title. His being to be *made* what the title imports, determines in what character it belongs to him. It must be as Mediator that the Son of God is here described as ‘*made* higher than the kings of the earth.’ In the sense of natural superiority he is ‘higher,’ and needs not to be *made*: in the sense of official supremacy only, then, can this phrase be understood. Besides, the words might have been rendered *most high* or *supreme over the kings of the earth*. The very same term is often used to express the supremacy of God, and is translated ‘Most High.’ The dominion of Messiah over civil rulers on the one hand, and the subjection of such to him on the other, are thus clearly imported in this title.

In the prophecy of Jeremiah, there occurs the following passage: ‘Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O KING OF NATIONS?’ [Jer 10.6,7.] *Nations* here mean organised civil bodies. *King* is a title of office, expressive of supreme rule or government. He to whom this title belongs is the true and living God, the God of Israel as distinguished from heathen idols. But as the God of Israel is God in Christ, the title may be regarded as equally applicable to the Redeemer.

Should any hesitate, however, to admit this inference, the excuse for doing so cannot be urged in respect to the next proof we have to adduce. The exile of Patmos, while introducing his apocalyptic vision under the influence of the Spirit, speaks of Jesus Christ as ‘THE PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH.’ [Rev. 1.5.] The whole context, not to speak of the very verse in which the title occurs, determines the reference to the mediatorial character of our Redeemer,—that character, namely, in which he bore faithful witness as a prophet, rose from the dead, and washed us from our sins in his blood. There is no room to doubt for a moment that it is Christ as Mediator who is spoken of as ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. [The Ruler (or Prince) of the kings of the Earth.] The persons who are here supposed to be subject to Christ, are kings, civil rulers, supreme and subordinate, all in civil authority, whether in the legislative, judicial, or executive branches of government. Of such Jesus Christ is Prince;—ὁ ἄρχων, ruler, lord, chief, the first in power, authority, and dominion.

The most splendid title of all remains to be noticed. It occurs twice in the Revelation of John. ‘These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is LORD OF LORDS, AND KING OF KINGS.’ ‘His name is called the Word of God—and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS’—Κύριος κυρίων καὶ Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων. [Rev. 17.14; 19.16.] The whole book of Revelation relates to Christ as Mediator. The sublime predictions, in which this resplendent title is ascribed to him, treat of the last struggle betwixt Christ and his enemies, in which these enemies are to be finally subdued, and their opposition to him to be buried in oblivion. ► He, by whom the victory is to be secured, is the same who is spoken of, in the forty-fifth psalm, as ‘girding his sword upon his thigh, and in his majesty riding prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness!’ and, in the prophecy of Isaiah, as ‘coming up with dyed garments from Bozrah, red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat.’ It is ‘the Faithful and True, who in righteousness doth judge and make war.’ He is represented as Head of the Church, sitting on ‘a white horse;’ while, as Head over all things to the Church, he is described as ‘having on his head many crowns, as clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, as smiting the nations with a sharp sword, ruling them with a rod of iron, treading the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and having on his vesture and on his thigh the name written King of kings and Lord of lords.’ There is nothing equivocal here. The Mediator is exhibited as waging war with the kings of the earth, who oppose his reign: and his right so to do is plainly involved in the title conspicuously inscribed on his vestment—a title not more fraught with terror to those who oppose his dominion, than confirmatory of his official supremacy over civil rulers of every description.

The proof of the mediatorial dominion over the nations, derived from these sources—from commands, predictions, and designations—is so abundant, varied, direct, complete, that we cannot but express our surprise the doctrine in question should ever have been denied or overlooked. After what has been said, there may be few who will venture formally to impugn this precious truth; but it cannot escape observation, that there are many, very many, who are in the habit of constantly neglecting it. This is the case to a mournful extent, not only with the nations and their rulers, whom it greatly concerns to recognise and act upon it; but with private Christians, who profess to be concerned for the mediatorial honours of their Redeemer. That it should be so, is much to be deplored, and is, to a considerable extent, unaccountable. How dishonouring to Christ thus to attempt to tear from his head the crown of the nations! And how blind, even to their own true interests, are those who thus provoke the Lord to anger, and expose themselves to the withering frown of his sovereign displeasure!

To the doctrine thus established, no solid objection can be made. Standing as it does on such a basis of Scripture evidence, it bids defiance to every argument which prejudice, or self-interest, or perverted reason can muster against it. It has been violently assailed in some quarters, notwithstanding. The grounds on which this opposition has proceeded have, for the most part, been already overturned.

It has been supposed, for example, to exclude Jehovah, essentially considered, from the government of the nations. This objection is just a branch of the common objection which is brought against the mediatorial dominion altogether, and which has already been sufficiently answered. We repeat, that delegation does not involve the surrender of power; and Messiah's dominion over the nations being of a delegated character, it does not at all follow that when the Father committed this power to the Son he parted with it himself. Indeed, it is with the mediatorial power over the nations as it is with that over the Church; and as the latter certainly does not interfere with the essential dominion of God, no more does the former.

Equally vain is it to object that the doctrine in question is at variance with the opinion that civil society originates with God as the God of nature. True, civil society is founded in nature, and not in grace: but its subjection to Christ is not the least inconsistent with this. The objection will be found to carry farther than, perhaps, its friends were aware of; for, if everything that springs from the law of nature is to be excluded from the dominion of the Mediator, many things must be excepted which they have been accustomed to admit as under that dominion. Marriage originates in a law of nature: does it follow that parties united in this relation are to have no regard to the authority and honour of the Redeemer, that they are not to be guided by his law, or to act under the influence of his grace? 'Let him that marrieth, marry only *in the Lord*'—► The domestic relation has its foundation in the law of nature: are parents and children, masters and servants, at liberty to regard themselves as not under subjection to the Redeemer? What, then, are we to make of those commands which require parents to 'bring up their children in the nurture and admonition *of the Lord*;' children to 'obey their parents *in the Lord*;' and servants to be obedient to them that are their masters '*as unto Christ*'? Nay, are there not even some prominent parts of religion, such as prayer and praise, which have their

foundation in nature, and in which we are certainly not at liberty, much less bound, to have no respect to Christ as Mediator? On the same principle, then, it by no means follows, because nations originate in nature, which we freely admit that they do, that they are not placed under Christ: or, in other words, it is no objection to the dominion of Christ over the nations, that civil society springs from God as the God of nature.

But the most specious objection, perhaps, is derived from what is matter of fact. The nations do not acknowledge Christ. They are, many of them at least, in a state of open rebellion against him. Not a few of them hath given their power to the Beast,—to the avowed enemy of the Messiah. ‘The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.’ [Psalm 2.2-3.] But, as before remarked, right and acknowledgment are different things; and the former is not dependent on the latter. On the one hand, an unlawful usurper may be acknowledged, but this can never confer on him the right to rule. On the other hand, acknowledgment may be refused to one whose right of dominion rests on the most solid foundation. It is easy to see that if acknowledgment were necessary to establish right, neither the Messiah’s dominion over the *Church*, nor Jehovah’s moral government of *the world*, could be established, as there are many, who not only refuse to recognise, but pointedly dispute, both the one and the other. Because, ‘we see not yet all things put under him,’ as respects active moral subjection, we are not to consider the statement as invalidated, that the Father ‘hath put all things in subjection under his feet,’ as respects his right of sovereignty.

II. The fact, of the mediatorial rule over the nations having been considered, we proceed to the ACTS of Christ’s regal administration towards this class of his subjects.

First. Although civil society originates with God as the God of nature, nations may be said, in a certain sense, to derive even their existence from Christ. The origin of civil society and political government has given rise to much speculation. Whether they originate with God or with man, and in what sense they can be said to originate with either or with both, are topics that admit of extensive discussion, but into which we do not feel ourselves called at present to enter. The Scriptures, it may be remarked, represent civil government as at once an ordinance of *God* and an ordinance of man.¹ In as far as it is the right of the people to fix the constitution, to elect the rulers, and to revise and amend the system under which they live, civil government may be regarded as an ordinance of *man*. But it is not to be inferred from this, that it depends solely on the will of man whether civil institution should be set up in a country at all, that civil society originates wholly in voluntary compact, or that whatever is sanctioned by the public will is necessarily right, and consequently obligatory. The most frightful results would follow from admitting such an absolute sovereignty of the people as this. ► There are too many instances on record, of the great body of the people having gone egregiously astray, ever to permit us to give our unqualified assent to such a principle. Indeed, it is manifestly absurd, to

1 Rom. 13.2; 1 Pet. 2.13.

suppose that the majority of a nation should be free from the moral control of the law and authority of God, in the formation of their civil institutions. This were to ascribe to an aggregate body, composed of moral subjects who are individually responsible, a proud, irreligious, irresponsible independence of the will of the great moral Governor himself;—a supposition so monstrous that, however much overlooked in practice, every one must shrink from it in theory. It is admitted that God has invested the people with power in political matters, and that the people of course have a right to the exercise of this power; but it is at the same time to be attentively observed that *he has given them a law* by which they are to be regulated in the use of this power, and it is only when they act according to the law given them that their determinations and institutions possess the sanction and obligation of righteousness.

Civil government can be the ordinance of *man* in no sense that is inconsistent with its being strictly and properly the ordinance of *God*. Now, it is not merely in regard to his overruling providence that it is the ordinance of God. In this respect, indeed, ‘the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men: he removeth kings and setteth up kings’ (Dan. 4.17). But, in this sense, the grossest tyranny and misrule might also be regarded as the ordinance of God. Civil government originates with him *morally* not less than *providentially*. It is the *moral ordinance* of God. It is a *divine institution*. The principles, by which its formation and management are to be regulated, are laid down in the Bible. Lawful magistrates, whether supreme or subordinate, are consequently ‘the ministers of God;’ not the mere creatures and servants of men, but the authorised vicegerents of heaven. [Rom. 13.4.]

Nor, in saying that the nations derive their existence from Christ, do we say anything at variance with what has just been laid down. This is perfectly consistent with maintaining, as we do, that civil government proceeds from God, not as the God of grace, but as the God of nature. We admit that it springs from him as the supreme moral Governor of the universe, having its foundation in natural principles which belong to the constitution of man. National society, political government, magistratical authority, all originate in the moral government of God as the God of nature, and not in the mediatorial system. These might all have existed, had there never been a mediatorial economy; nay, they do often exist where the economy of grace is quite unknown. We are anxious not to be misunderstood on this point.

At the same time, it must not be forgotten that, as we have already shewn, God has placed the affairs of the moral universe in the hands of his Son as Mediator. The dispensations of providence in general are put under his feet; in consequence of which, such dispensations as give rise to the existence of nations, or regulate their political aspects and interests, may be viewed as managed and directed by him. And not only so; but civil government, as a moral ordinance of God, is put under the Redeemer’s feet; and, in as far also as this is the case, may not nations be regarded as deriving their being from Christ? It is not enough to say that nations owe their existence to God. This is true: but it is not the whole truth. They originate in the will, authority, and appointment of the Messiah. We find it, indeed, said, ‘There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God;’ but we also find issuing from the Mediator

this proclamation, 'By ME kings reign, and princes decree justice: by ME princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.' [Prov. 8.15,16.]

Nations are thus invested with a high and noble character. They are the moral subjects of the Redeemer. Their rulers are not the mere servants of men, the creatures of popular choice, but the ministers of God, the moral deputies of heaven, the servants, the representatives, the vicegerents of the Prince of the kings of the earth. This gives them a peculiar elevation and dignity; throws around them a moral grandeur; lays them under obligations to attend to moral qualifications and conduct; and entitles them to be treated by the people with esteem, veneration, and honour.

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Discussion Questions:

1. Beside scripture commands of submission, and predictions of Christ's kingly rule, what third set of proofs serve to show that Christ possesses a dominion over the nations as mediator?
 - A. The third set of proofs is found in the numerous designations given to Christ, implying this dominion.
2. What designation is given to Christ in the 89th Psalm, relevant to this discussion?
 - A. He is identified as "higher" or even "most high" or "supreme" "over the kings of the earth."
3. What designations are given to Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation, bearing on this discussion?
 - A. He is called "the Prince of the kings of the earth," and "King of kings," and "Lord of Lords."
4. Though Christians might not formally impugn this doctrine when it is demonstrated, what observation cannot be avoided, which must be mournful to us?
 - A. "There are many, very many, who are in the habit of constantly neglecting" this doctrine, truth, or dominion.
5. Is the doctrine of Christ's mediatorial dominion over the nations at variance with the fact that civil society originates with God as the God of nature?
 - A. No. We can assert both in harmony.
6. What other institutions originate in the law of nature, and are yet brought into a subjection or subservience to the dominion of the Mediator?
 - A. Marriage; Domestic relations, including the mutual duties of parents and children, masters and servants, (managers and employees.) Even particular parts of God's worship which may be considered the inescapable dictates of the light of nature: prayer and praise.
7. If we see the matter-of-fact present state of the nations, in their rebellion against Christ, as impeaching his authority as mediator, and then conclude against it, what absurd consequence would follow from such reasoning?
 - A. This reasoning would oblige us to acknowledge that Jehovah himself has no moral dominion over the world.
8. Do nations, in a certain sense, derive even their existence from Christ?
 - A. Yes. Government is an ordinance regulated under God's law, and governors must act as "ministers of God." Particular nations derive their existence from Christ as he is the supreme moral Governor of the universe. And further, God has placed the affairs of this moral universe in the hands of his Son as Mediator.
9. In what Old Testament passage, do we hear the claims of the Son of God over the rulers of the earth?
 - A. Proverbs 8.15,16: "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice: by me princes rule, and nobles," etc.